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Statement submitted by Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

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Statement

The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, a non-governmental organization working towards the elimination of violence against women and the realization of gender equality, asserts that the pervasiveness of commercial sexual exploitation is a significant barrier to the achievement of gender equality.

The Millennium Development Goals prioritize the empowerment of women. However, misguided economic policies often have led to prioritizing revenue over gender equality. Rather than recognizing women's potential, Governments have adopted development policies effectively normalizing and, in some places, legalizing sexual exploitation. Prostitution and pornography are cultural practices that arise from the historical subordination of women to men. The Beijing Platform for Action, paragraph 118, recognizes that "[v]iolence against women ... derives essentially from cultural patterns, in particular the harmful effects of certain traditional or customary practices ... that perpetuate the lower status accorded to women in the family, the workplace, the community and society". The sex industry is built upon and maintains women's low social status, relegating them to the role of merchandise. To promote women's empowerment, Governments must eliminate commercial sexual exploitation, including sexualized and violent images of women in the media. The pervasiveness of pornography, especially on the Internet, fuels harmful stereotypes about women as sexual objects to be bought and sold.

Governments must adopt policies to combat the demand for commercial sex by educating young people, prosecuting perpetrators who buy and sell women, and addressing the media's sexualization of women and girls and the normalization of prostitution. Women and girls who are vulnerable as a result of poverty, racism or gender-based violence must be provided assistance, including housing, educational, financial, medical and mental health services.

We call for implementation of the Millennium Development Goals of achieving gender equality by:

- Ratifying and implementing international conventions, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others; the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.
- Strengthening laws, policies and programmes to assist victims of gender-based violence.
- Criminalizing perpetrators of sexual exploitation, including buyers and procurers of prostituted and trafficked women and girls.
- Supporting educational programmes addressing sexual exploitation, including education and empowerment of women and girls, and teaching men and boys about the harms.
- Rejecting legalization or normalization of commercial sex.

- Recognizing the role of the media in promoting sexual exploitation and adopting measures to combat the abuse of women and girls in the production and consumption of pornography.